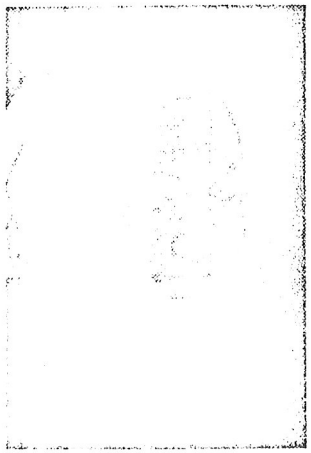
SECRETS OF THE CIA

# American Mata Hari Who Duped Castro



Marie Lorenz: spied on Fidel.

*Its clandestine operations now undergoing a sometimes painful official scrutiny, the Central Intelligence Agency maintains, as always, a tight lip. But from interviews with the agents who hired out to do the CIA's cloak-and-dagger work, News reporter Paul Meskil tells here for the first time of the intrigue that surfaced as the Cuban missile crisis, a confrontation that pushed the U.S. to the brink of war with the Soviet Union. First of a series.*

By PAUL MESKIL

A BEAUTIFUL German-American girl scored an intelligence coup for the CIA by stealing secret papers from the Havana hotel suite she had shared with Fidel Castro.

Among the papers, she told The News, were maps showing the sites selected for Soviet missile installations in Cuba.

Curvy, black-haired Marie Lorenz, who lives quietly in New York, was the Mata Hari of the Caribbean cold war. She was one of the most glamorous members of a spy ring recruited for the Central Intelligence Agency by Frank Fiorini, a onetime triple agent who later became known to the American public as Watergate burglar Frank Sturgis.

Ms. Lorenz, Sturgis, other former espionage agents, Caribbean conspirators, and Cuban freedom fighters were interviewed for this series on CIA operations in the Caribbean and the Americas. Some of their clandestine activities are told here for the first time, and some are being investigated by the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence and Vice President Rockefeller's Commission on CIA Activities.

According to sources, the CIA was, to one degree or another, involved in:

- Plots to assassinate foreign heads of state, including Castro of Cuba, Papa Doc Duvalier of Haiti and Rafael Trujillo of the Dominican Republic.
- Smashing a Castroite attempt to invade Panama and sabotage the Panama Canal.
- The explosion of a munitions ship in Havana harbor.
- A fantastic scheme to seize a Soviet ship and use it to obtain the release of the captured American spy ship Pueblo.
- Secret deals with American mobsters who had lost their multimillion-dollar Cuban gambling casinos.
- Armed raids on Cuba and many shipments of guerrilla fighters, weapons, explosives and other war materials to the island before and after the Bay of Pigs fiasco.

Marie Lorenz played a small but important role in the labyrinth of Caribbean conspiracies.

Her Cuban adventures began on a balmy evening in February 1960, when a launch flying the Cuban revolutionary flag pulled alongside the gleaming white luxury liner Berlin, anchored in Havana harbor, on the next-to-last stop of a Caribbean cruise.

In the launch were 20 or so heavily armed Cubans, all wearing beards and rumpled olive-green fatigues. The liner's accommodation ladder was

(Continued on page 62)

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*(Continued from page 2)*

lowered and the *barbudos* (bearded ones) swarmed aboard like pirates, grenades dangling from their belts and machine guns swinging from their shoulders.

Women in evening gowns screamed and ran for cover with their dinner-jacketed husbands, believing the ship was being raided by bandits. But other American tourists recognized the leader of the sinister-looking band as Fidel Castro, the new prime minister of Cuba, and they crowded around him for autographs.

"I'm a friend," he shouted, obviously enjoying the commotion he had caused. "I like Americans."

The Berlin's skipper, former German Navy Capt. Heinrich Lorenz, invited the *barbudos* to stay for cocktails and dinner, and he introduced Castro to his vivacious 18-year-old daughter, Marie.

"My father spoke Spanish and he got along well with Castro," Marie told this reporter. "He took Castro and his men on a tour of the ship, then asked them to please leave their guns outside the dining room before they sat down for dinner.

"Castro said they didn't feel safe without guns, so my father allowed them to keep their pistols, but he made them leave the machine guns, automatic rifles and grenades in the smoking room."

Castro sat at the captain's table, between Lorenz and Marie. During the meal, he smiled frequently at Marie, and she was as impressed as any normal teenage girl would be by compliments from the flamboyant hero of the Cuban revolution.

She spoke German and English, which she had learned from her American mother. Castro said he needed a secretary who could write letters in these languages. Before the meal was over, he offered the job to Marie.

### Took Offer As Joke

"He asked me to stay in Havana and work for him," she said."My father and I both laughed. My father said I was going back to Germany to finish my education."

Castro promised to write to her, so she gave him two addresses—her parents' home in Bremen, Germany, and her brother's apartment in New York, where she planned to stay when the Caribbean cruise ended. She never expected to see or hear from Fidel again.

About two weeks later, two Cuban officers called on Marie in New York. They carried a message from Castro, saying he was in desperate need of an English-German translator. He had sent a Cubana Airlines plane to bring her back to Havana.

"I made a big mistake," Marie said. "I got on that plane."

During the flight to Havana, she tried to imagine her life in Castroland. She thought she would have a desk in the premier's secretarial pool and a small apartment of her own. She may even have dreamed of a romance with the tall, charismatic dictator. But her airborne illusions were shattered soon after the plane landed.

"I was very idealistic then," she said. "I was going on an adventure and to my first job. I was going to help the new government. Instead, I became Castro's plaything.

"I was driven from the airport to the Havana Hilton, where Fidel had taken over the 24th floor. For the next four months, I hardly ever got out of the Hilton. When I did get out, I was under guard. If I wanted to go down to the pool or coffee shop, two *barbudos* would go with me."

### 'I Was His Prisoner'

Asked to define her relationship with Castro during this period, Marie said: "I was his prisoner. I was trapped."

"Were you ever in love with Fidel?"

"No, never. How can you be in love when you're afraid, when you're treated like a piece of furniture, when you're sleeping with a live bazooka under the bed, when you're living in a room with guns on every table and cigar butts all over the floor?"

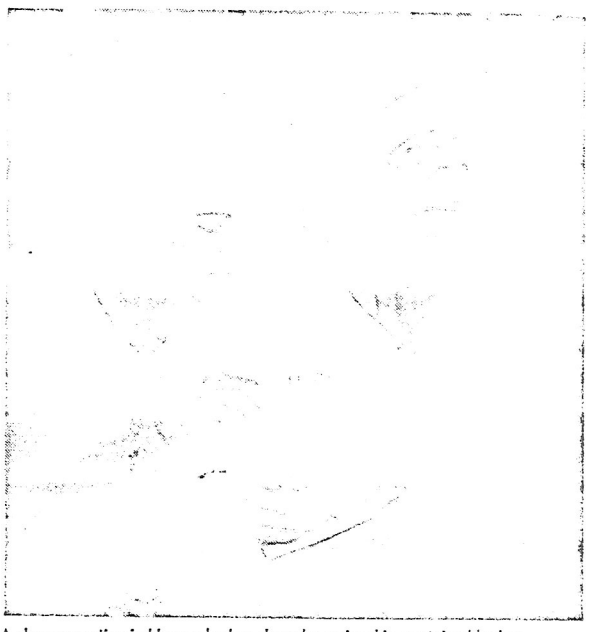
"My way of thinking was German," she continued. "Everything in my life had been very orderly, very neat and clean. I never realized anyone, especially a prime minister, could be so disorganized. I thought he would have several offices, with desks, chairs and telephones. All he had, at this point, was a suite of rooms at the Hilton, where he lived and worked. I was kept in one of the rooms. The door to the hall was locked from the outside. *Barbudos* and visitors were in the next room, but the door between the rooms was kept locked.

"All I could do was read books, study Spanish, walk back and forth, listen to the radio or go on the balcony and look out over Havana. I was miserable. My father tried to find out what had happened to me. He contacted the American Embassy in Havana (Marie was born an American citizen,) but nothing happened.

"The only clothes I had were what I brought with me from New York. I couldn't go out to buy anything. Fidel had me measured for a uniform so I would look like a member of the 26th of July Movement. An olive-green uniform with a lieutenant's star.

"That way, when I was allowed out under guard, he thought people would think I was one of the his officers. But almost every Havana housewife heard rumors that Castro was keeping a foreigner, an American girl, at the Hilton. I was becoming a problem to him.

"One day two *barbudos* came to the room while Fidel was out. They said they were there to help me. They took me on a 20-minute plane ride to the Isle of Pines. They showed me the beautiful black sand beach there and then drove me by jeep to this huge prison complex. They showed me a cell where dictator Fulgencio Batista had imprisoned Fidel and Raul (Fidel's brother) years before. I went into the cell to look at a bronze plaque on the wall. They shut the door and locked me in the cell. Then they went away.



A chance meeting in Havana harbor aboard a cruise ship captained by her father brought Marie Lorenz and Fidel Castro together. It began a liaison destined to have international repercussions.

### She Wasn't Pampered

"I spent a week there, eating the same food as the other prisoners—blacks beans, rice, stale bread and coffee. As far as I know, I was the only woman there.

"Every morning we would hear the firing squads. As soon as it got light, the birds would start singing. Then the guns would go off. Then marching and quiet. Then breakfast and cell checks. The guards would check to see if you'd hanged yourself during the night or if you'd done something wrong in there where there was hardly room to turn around. It was horrible.

"After seven days, I was taken out and flown back to Havana."

Marie was never told why she was jailed. She now believes Castro had her locked up to make sure she didn't escape while he was out of the country visiting the United States and South America.

One night she was with Castro and his bodyguards in the lobby of the Riviera Hotel when a handsome, wavy-haired man approached her. He wore the olive-green rebel uniform and the insignia of a captain in the Cuban air force.

While Castro was conferring with his aides on the other side of the lobby, the captain mingled with the *barbudos* around Marie and whispered to her in English: "I know about you."

"Can you help me?" she responded. "Can you get me out of here?"

"Yes. I'm with the American Embassy. I'll get you out."

This was her introduction to Commandante Frank Fiorini (later known as Frank Sturgis), Castro confidant and hired agent for the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency.

### Agrees to Spy on Fidel

For the next few weeks Frank kept in contact with her in person and through Castro officers who were working for him. Marie agreed to spy on Castro. She filched secret documents and reported Castro's conversations with important visitors overheard through the hotel walls. By now, she could read and speak Spanish fairly well.

"The suite was full of guns and papers," she said. "Fidel had papers strewn all over the tables, the floor, the bed, the dresser. He had one filing cabinet that was never locked. It was full of money, papers, documents, maps. I took papers out and smuggled them to Frank. Fidel never missed them.

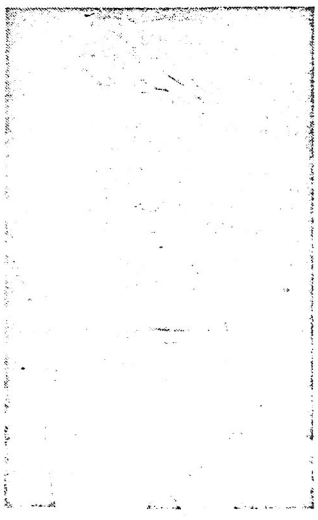
"Frank said, 'Get all the data you can,' and I did. I was a regular Mata Hari."

Then Marie became sick, and Frank arranged her escape. Two Cuban officers took her out of the hotel while Castro was away and put her on a Cubana Airlines flight to New York.

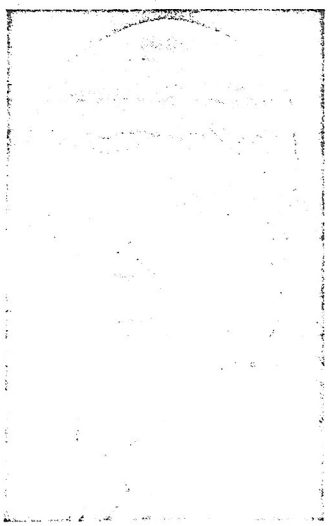
About that time, Frank also set up the escapes of two top Cuban air force officers, a project that forced him to leave Cuba. He moved his base of operations to Miami, but remained in touch with his agents on the island and his CIA contacts in Havana and Washington.

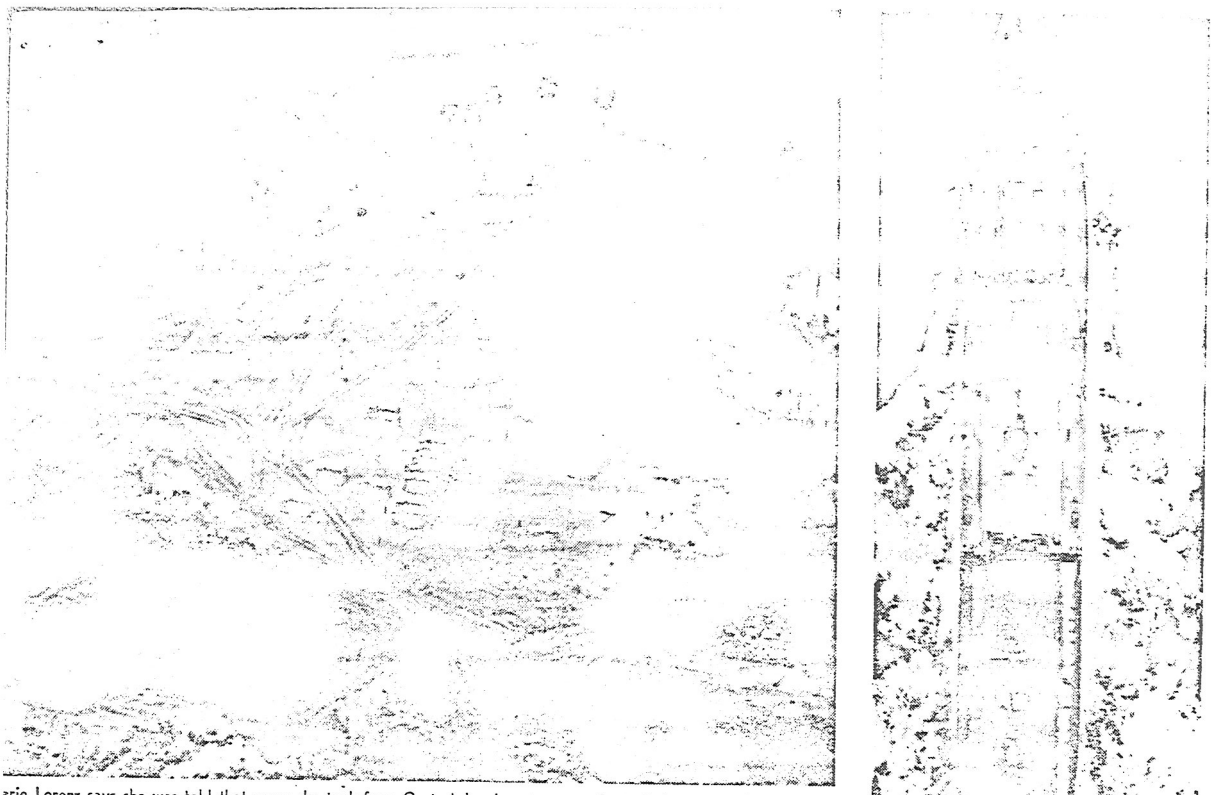
When she recovered from her illness, Marie joined him in Miami and volunteered for a mission that meant certain death if she were caught.

Early in 1960, Castro went to



Discovery of missile sites in Cuba provoked a cold-war showdown between then President John F. Kennedy and then Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev, a confrontation that had the world holding its breath.





arie Lorenz says she was told that maps she took from Castro's headquarters were factor in locating and otographing missile sites (above). Under pressure from U.S., Khrushchev ordered missiles removed and shipped back Soviet Union (right).

ienaga de Zapata, a vast swamp that e intended to convert to rice fields. As oon as he left Havana with his usual ntourage, Marie received orders to re-urn to the Cuban capital immediately. he boarded a regular Cubana Airlines ight, posing as an American tourist nd carrying her Castro uniform and a aded revolver in her overnight bag.

She arrived in Havana a few hours fter Castro left town. Americans were till welcome there in those days, and uban customs officers seldom searched ourists' luggage.

"There was no trouble at the air-ort," Marie said. "I checked into a leazy little hotel in downtown Havana, hanged into my lieutenant's uniform nd went direct to the Havana Hilton. y this time, Castro had a home on ie outskirts of Havana, Casa Cojimar, it it was more convenient for him to eep his papers at the Hilton.

"He had Suite 2408 and the adjoin-g suites. I had the key to 2408. obody recognized me when I came to the hotel. I had changed my hair yle and made my complexion darker han it is naturally. And I wore dark asses. They (Castro's people) all ore dark glasses, even at night.

"A lot of people were loitering in ie lobby, *barbudos* and everything. I st walked right through. Passing the esk was the main thing that bothered e because the desk clerks knew me. I id a snub-nosed .38-caliber Detective pecial clipped to the inside of my aistband. Nobody seemed to notice e. I walked to the elevators and went to the 24th floor.

### aw Her Opportunity

"Nobody was around. When Fidel ft, they all left with him: his body-ards, his advisers, whatever. When I id lived there, I was either all alone d everything was dead quiet, or else idel was there and there was a lot of ise and cigar smoke.

"I unlocked the door to Suite 2108, ent inside and double-locked the door hind me. I felt pretty confident be-use I knew Fidel was at Cienaga de pata. When he left the suite, no one to go in. Those were the orders.

"As usual, the suite was littered ith papers and the filing cabinet was en. I couldn't get everything. I took much as I could and stuffed papers f maps into my uniform pockets and side the jacket. Then I left the Hil-n, went back to the other hotel, changed into a dress and caught the next flight to Miami.

"Frank met me at the airport and I gave him all the papers. I never knew exactly what information they contained. I was told the stuff was good, it was fantastic, 'the United States government is very happy.' "

Among the papers were topographical maps of Cuba on which several sections of undeveloped land, miles away from any population center, had been marked with hand-drawn circles. The maps also had handwritten notations that Marie couldn't read because "they were in a foreign language—Czech, I think."

### Her Find Was Valuable

Three years later, another intelligence agent told her the maps were "the original groundwork plans" for Soviet missile sites. The circled areas were the spots where Soviet missile bases were built in 1962, setting off the historic showdown between President Kennedy and Premier Khrushchev.

From information supplied by agents inside Cuba and Cuban refugees, and from aerial photos snapped from U-2 spy planes, the CIA was able to pinpoint all the missile bases on the island. But Marie believes her solo mission to Castro's lair gave the CIA its first inkling of what the Russians were plotting. She also believes Castro suspected she was the burglar who swiped his secrets. (The CIA has declined to comment on Marie's involvement.)

In March 1960, soon after she had completed this dangerous assignment, Marie received a mysterious telegram from Havana. Delivered to her brother's apartment at 341 W. 84th St., it said: "CALL 28607 (Castro's private number) LATE AT NIGHT. IT'S VERY IMPORTANT."

It was signed "Yanez," meaning Capt. Jesus Yanez Pelletier, one of Castro's closest aides. Marie's first impulse was to ignore the message, but curiosity overcame common sense. Without mentioning the telegram to her brother, she left the apartment around midnight to place a collect call to Havana from a phone booth on the corner.

As she stepped into the small vestibule between the outer and inner front doors to the apartment house, two men grabbed her. One of them was Yanez.

"They had guns," Marie recalled. "They were going to take me back to Cuba. Yanez said a plane was waiting at Idlewild Airport. They hit me in the face and tried to drag me out to a car.

"A person who lived in the building opened the door and saw me screaming and fighting. This person ran down toward Riverside Drive. The interruption distracted the Cubans enough so that I broke loose and ran. I heard one of them yell, 'Shoot! Shoot!' but they didn't. I ran up to Broadway and found a cop there.

"The Cubans took off. My face was all bloody. Thank God for that cop. He took me to the station and I told the detectives an unbelievable story of intrigue and fear. I told them who Yanez was and I gave them the name of a West Side hotel where Castro people stayed when they were in New York. The detectives went there and found Yanez, but they couldn't arrest him because he had diplomatic immunity. He had a diplomatic passport saying he was with the prime minister's office. They told him to get on his plane and go back to Cuba."

When Yanez returned to Havana without Marie, Castro did what the New York cops couldn't do. Fidel sent him to prison.

### Discussed Killing Castro

Asked if she and other members of Frank's spy ring had ever discussed killing Castro, Marie replied: "Sure. We all did. We were going to bomb him during one of his speeches. We were going to fly over and drop it right on top of him.

"We had the bomb, the plane. I was going to go along. Hit and run. We were all set, but it was called off. Somebody stopped it. That's all I know."

Marie said two American agents went to Cuba to assassinate Castro shortly before the Bay of Pigs invasion.

"I met them at a little white house we rented in the Cuban colony in Miami. I think it was on Flagler St. We would never stay in one place too long. We'd rent a house and move on. Anyway, it was at one of our meetings that they talked real heavy about going in and killing him.

"The two Americans went in, but they didn't get out. They grew beards, dressed like Castro soldiers. I heard they came very, very close to killing him at one of his speeches."

Marie said she made three boat trips to Cuba, delivering guns and supplies to anti-Castro guerrillas. She worked with Frank and Alex Rorke, both of whom were contract employes of the CIA, meaning they were not listed on any federal payroll.

"There's really no contract," she explained. "Nothing is put down on paper. You just say you're doing this for the good of your country. I didn't handle the money end of it. We were given what we needed."

### 'Eduardo' Supplied Cash

When cash was needed, it came from a CIA man she knew only as Eduardo. He would meet Frank and Alex from time to time at a "safe house" in Miami.

"Eduardo was funding our thing," Marie said. "When we went to pick up the money, I stayed in the car. I saw him when he opened the door of this little white house we used."

Years later, while reading about the Watergate break-in, Marie saw a newspaper photo of former CIA man E. Howard Hunt and immediately recognized him as the elusive "Eduardo." She also recognized a picture of Sturgis, whom she had known as Frank Fiorini.

Sturgis was one of the five burglars caught in Democratic National Committee headquarters at the Watergate complex on June 17, 1972. Four of the five—Sturgis, Bernard Barker, Eugenio Rolando Martinez and James W. McCord, then security chief for the Nixon reelection campaign committee—were former CIA employes.

Sturgis, Barker and Martinez had been active in preparations for the Bay of Pigs landing. So was Hunt, the fiction-writing mastermind of the Watergate burglary. And he referred to Sturgis, Barker and Martinez in court testimony as "some of my old CIA contacts."

Sturgis returned to Washington this month, nearly three years after his arrest there, to testify at secret staff sessions of the Rockefeller Commission on CIA Activities. He won't discuss his testimony, but other sources said he was asked about CIA operations ranging from domestic spying to political murders.

*(Tomorrow: Frank Fiorini Sturgis, a real-life James Bond.)*